

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Coulter
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered for a maximum of six young people between the ages of five and under 18 years. It is owned by a city council and provides short-term placements for young people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home continues to provide good quality respite care to a group of extremely vulnerable young people with complex care needs. A well developed placement planning process ensures each young person receives individualised care that addresses their specific need. Young people respond positively to the care and attention they receive from staff. Staff have created a safe and stimulating environment that is warm and welcoming. The new extension has created another communal area that is ideal for indoor play.

Staff have aspirations for the young people in their care and there is an expectation they will be able to gain new social experiences both within the home and local community during their stays. The progress each young person makes during their visits is carefully documented and appropriately shared with parents, teachers and social workers. Young people participate in a range of social and recreational activities within the home and local community.

The two recommendations arising from the last inspection have been appropriately addressed. The home has now acquired an adapted minibus and staff are now receiving monthly supervision. During this inspection it was recognised that a manager's report on the progress of the home needs to be produced at regular intervals. Although this has resulted in one action it does not reflect negatively on the current quality of care which is of a good standard.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	ensure a monitoring visit report is produced by the manager at regular intervals (Reg 34)	01/10/2012

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Young people's medical and care needs are effectively met during their visits. Comprehensive assessments identify medical needs and clear guidance is produced for staff on how they can be met. Specialist medical interventions are carried out by staff who have completed additional training and demonstrated their competence. Young people are afforded dignity and respect when receiving personal care. The recent introduction of a new overhead hoist system ensures young people are lifted and handled safely. Each young person's medication is stored and dispensed appropriately.

Each young person's culinary preferences and nutritional needs are established prior to their first visit. Although young people are encouraged to try new foods, staff are realistic about what can be achieved during a short stay and ensure each individual receives appropriate nutrition. Meals are produced freshly on the premises. Mealtimes are important within the home and staff and young people eat together. Young people benefit from the social stimulation and spontaneous social interaction that accompanies mealtimes. The current system helps to foster a feeling of inclusiveness. Young people were observed to respond positively to the social stimulation that was generated around a lunch time meal.

The home has recently been subject to a major development and refurbishment programme that has increased its communal facilities with the creation of a new lounge/play area. It now provides good quality accommodation. Young people's privacy is respected and each is assigned a room of their own for the duration of their stay. The home is wheelchair friendly and young people with mobility difficulties can access all areas. Young people are encouraged to remain physically active and can access a range of play equipment both in the home and in a specially designed

soft play area at the rear of the property.

Young people are supported in maintaining their educational placements and when required staff will arrange transport to and from school. Young people's social horizons are extended by participating in exciting social and recreational activities both within the home and local community. The home has recently acquired its own specially adapted transport which has extended the opportunities it can offer.

Young people clearly benefit from the attention and stimulation they receive during their visits and those observed appeared at ease in the company of the staff working with them. A range of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques are used to determine the views of young people about all aspects of their care. Staff help each young person develop a positive self-image and continually reinforce positive behaviour with praise and encouragement. They are clearly aware of the involuntary nature of many of the behaviours young people exhibit and the difficulties some young people experience in processing information. Young people are helped to make the link between actions and possible consequences. Young people displaying challenging behaviour are normally managed by the deployment of diversionary techniques. Physical interventions are only ever used if it is felt a young person is putting themselves or others at risk. Effective liaison with parents and teaching staff ensure each young person's behaviour is addressed in a consistent manner.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

The home provides invaluable support to families caring for young people with complex disabilities. All referrals come via the local authority's placement panel that determines the extent of the support to be provided. Prior to any admission young people and their families are given guides that detail the aim and objectives of the service and the facilities and activities that are available. The guides also explain the role of staff, contact arrangements and how to raise concerns or register a complaint. The majority of young people access regular overnight stays.

An effective assessment process ensures the care needs and risks associated with each young person's health and behaviour are identified prior to any admission. Staff undertake visits to schools and family homes in order to gain a better understanding of their social and cultural backgrounds. Information obtained through discussions with key individuals, such as parents and teachers, contribute to the placement planning process. The placement planning system is effective and provides guidance for staff on how the needs of each individual can be met. Young people are normally introduced to the home by undertaking a series of short visits. Staff are extremely attentive to the young people in their care and closely monitor their progress. Placement plans are updated in response to changing circumstances and significant incidents.

Due to the complex care needs of young people the composition of each daily group is carefully planned in advance. Such planning ensures staffing levels are

appropriate to meet the needs of the young people being accommodated. The majority of young people are cared for on a one-to-one basis. Information relating to the care of each young person is shared amongst the staff team and ensures a consistency in the delivery of care. Young people are treated with dignity and respect and all tasks associated with medical interventions and personal care are dealt with sensitively. Young people respond positively to the care and attention they receive from staff. Social interaction was observed to be spontaneous and warm.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people are cared for by staff that have the appropriate, experience, knowledge skills. All have been recruited via the local authority's rigorous recruitment process. All staff complete safeguarding training and are aware of their individual responsibilities to report any concerns.

Due to their disabilities a number of young people experience involuntary movements that can result in them striking out. Staff carefully monitor the movements and positioning of young people around the home to ensure no one is inadvertently hit. Staff are vigilant and note any unexplained marks or bruises they observe on a young person's body. Staff liaise effectively with parents, teachers and social workers and ensure they are informed if any young person has received an injury whilst in their care.

Young people are encouraged to engage in recreational activities in the home and community, staff are aware of each individual's vulnerabilities and incorporate risk assessments in the planning process. There are well established procedures for responding to serious incidents such as a young person going missing. Staff aim to ensure no young person is disadvantaged from participating in trips due to their complex health needs.

Staff have developed effective working practices for administering medication and carrying out person care tasks whilst out of the home.

The home provides care and accommodation within a safe environment. Access to the home is limited and all visitors have to report to staff and sign in. Young people can move freely around the building and have direct access to a safe enclosed play area at the rear of the property. Play equipment has been selected to meet the needs of young people with restricted movement. The building and its equipment is subject to regular health and safety checks. The new extension has been designed with the safety of young people in mind and for example, the introduction of under-floor heating has eliminated the risks associated with wall mounted radiators. There is clear guidance for staff to follow in the event of a fire. The fire alarm system is tested weekly and full evacuations carried out at regular intervals.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **adequate**.

Due to the unavailability of the Registered Manager, the home is currently being managed by the deputy manager. The deputy manager has the necessary experience and qualifications to deputise and is conversant with the responsibilities associated with the registered manager's role. The deputy manager is providing effective leadership. It is unclear about how long the current arrangements will be required. The deputy manager is supported by an enthusiastic and stable team of staff who are intent in providing good quality care to an extremely vulnerable group of young people with complex needs. Care provision is extremely 'child focused' and care is tailored to the specific needs of each young person.

There is effective communication between staff and handover meetings between shifts ensure key information is passed on. Regular staff meetings provide an opportunity to discuss issues relating to the daily operation of the home and its future developments. The home has recently had a reorganisation amongst the senior staff team with the appointment of a number of new senior practitioners. Staff are still familiarising themselves with their new roles and responsibilities. Staff are well supported and regular supervision provides opportunities for them to engage in reflective practice. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have access to a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that are updated in response to regulatory and legislative changes.

There is a culture of professional development within the staff team and an expectation that each individual will assume responsibility for updating their knowledge and skills on an on-going basis. Staff keep abreast of developments within the child care field and access training opportunities via the local authority's annual training programme. While staff were generally satisfied with existing training opportunities, a number felt that the increasing use of e-learning courses was undermining the quality of training. Given the complex nature of the care needs of the young people the home accommodates, specialist training courses are arranged to address issues such as the mental health of young people with learning difficulties. A record is kept on staff files of all courses attended

Staff aim to ensure that each young person's stay is both stimulating and fun. Home books are used to provide parents with a written record of each visit and record the progress each young person is making. Information gleaned from young people, their parents, social workers and teachers are used to create placement plans that aid their development. Individual plans are subject to regular review and are updated after each visit. The emphasis by staff on reinforcing positive progress helps to bolster young people's self-confidence. Each young person's progress is reflected in their looked after children reviews.

Although the operation of the home is subject to a monthly audit by the deputy manager and a monitoring visit by a local authority officer, comprehensive progress reports are not currently being produced as required at regular intervals. The home continues to develop and is now benefitting from the recent redevelopment and refurbishment programme. The home is now engaged in a process that will lead to

the creation of a new development plan. There is a clear commitment on the part of staff to continue to further improve the service the home offers. The home is appropriately resourced and evidence indicates it operates in the best interests of the young people currently accommodated. Staff have created a pleasant environment which is well maintained and suitable to the needs of young people with disabilities. Records and documents contain recent and relevant information and are stored in appropriately locked facilities.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.